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ABSTRACT

Concerned with the teaching of vocational agriculture and other vocational education in the rural south, this paper is directed toward an examination of occupational education programs as they relate to population served and to local labor markets. Findings of 2 studies of occupational training opportunities for rural youth in North Carolina are discussed. Recommendations include consolidating small schools to provide for more comprehensive occupational training, establishing more vocational centers, fully integrating separate school systems in the south, providing more manpower studies within the economic areas under consideration, and orienting vocational programs to accommodate occupational plans of local youth. (MJB)

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OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH

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PREFACE

This paper was originally prepared for presentation at a conference sponsored by the Agricultural Policy Institute at North Carolina State University. The conference, entitled "Vocational Agriculture in the Changing South," was designed to focus attention on the changing educational needs of rural southern youth. Dr. Rogers' paper, in attending to training opportunities and their relationships to occupational opportunities, provided not only a valuable addition to the conference at which it was presented, but it also stands very well on its own merits as a contribution to the literature on rural problems. In particular, the attention paid to the differential problems of white and Negro youth in rural areas is helpful in identifying a very serious question which will undoubtedly attract the attention of future researchers.

The Center extends its appreciation to Dr. Charles H. Rogers for completing the paper, and to the following people who reviewed the manuscript prior to its publication in the Occasional Paper Series:

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John K. Coster
Director.

OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH

Introduction

Since the passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, increasing efforts have been made to expand and improve the occupational education opportunities for both youth and adults. More recently the 1968 Vocational Education Amendments have intensified our national goals to make occupational training more relevant and to make it available to all who need it. In order to achieve these national goals, vast changes in programs of occupational education are required. This is ample justification for vocational agriculture teachers to examine the role that vocational agriculture should play in a rapidly changing environment.

The topic being considered relates to a problem that is much greater than can be solved by vocational agriculture alone. However, it does have tremendous implications for changes which are needed in vocational agriculture. There is no way to escape the fact that when we talk about occupational training opportunities for rural youth, we are speaking in large measure to vocational agriculture, home economics, and office occupations. In 1968 the Advisory Council on Vocational Education in its evaluation report stated that:

> Rural high schools tend to be too small to offer more than agriculture, home economics, and office education. Most of their students will ultimately seek urban jobs but have no preparation for urban life. This deficiency has been particularly serious for rural southern Negroes whose resultant plight can be observed in most large cities of the land.[1]

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[1]Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate. Notes and Working Papers Concerning the Administration of Programs Authorized Under Vocational Education Act of

In many rural communities in the South, the only opportunity for a young man to acquire occupational training is through vocational agriculture. Furthermore, it will be a long time yet before comprehensive vocational offerings will be available to all rural youth. Therefore, the group represented here must be concerned with occupational training opportunities for youth reaching beyond narrowly conceived boundaries of vocational agriculture. Any changes that are needed in vocational agriculture must then be considered in light of the broader problem of expanding and improving occupational training opportunities for all rural youth.

In viewing the occupational training opportunities currently available to rural youth and those which are needed, we must first understand the environmental setting in which training is required and the size and the nature of the rural population. In recent years American society has been characterized as an urban, industrialized society. Population statistics show that the ratio of urban to rural population has increased to the extent that in 1964 the urban population constituted 70.9 percent of the total population.[2] What has not been recognized is that the rural population in 1964 was estimated at 55.3 million.[3] The size of the rural population in the United States in 1964 was larger than the entire

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[1] 1963, Public Law 88-210 as Amended, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), (Parts of this report were later published as: General Report of the Advisory Council on Vocational Education, Vocational Education: The Bridge Between Man and His Work.) pp. 33-34.

[2] President's National Advisory Council on Rural Poverty, The People Left Behind, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967) p.3.

[3] Ibid.

population of the United States in 1880.[4] If this population were constituted as a nation, it would have ranked as the tenth largest nation in the world--a larger population than that of the United Kingdom.[5] This characterization of the rural population is made to demonstrate that, regardless of statistical representations, the population still constitutes an element of such magnitude it must be reckoned with in providing occupational training, particularly for its youth.

Another feature which must be considered is the migration of youth from rural to urban areas. In contemporary American society, this migration has been accelerated by the fact that differential fertility rates exist between rural and urban populations, and at the same time technological advances in agriculture have reduced sharply the utilization of rural manpower in the production of food and fiber. The crux of the problem in recent years has been the migration of unskilled workers from rural sectors to the industrial centers of population. Two factors contribute to the problem of providing occupational training for youth who will migrate: heavy reliance on local taxation for support of education, and the relative autonomy of local schools. These factors militate against the development of educational programs designed to prepare persons for occupations located outside the local community. The Advisory Council on Vocational Education recognized this when it stated that "Rural schools have given little attention to the occupational

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[4]"Changes in Farm Production and Efficiency," PERB 3, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, June 1964.

[5]Britanica Book of the Year 1965, (Chicago: Encycolpedia Britanica, Inc., 1965), p. 652.

needs of students who migrate to urban centers."[6]

Even though the migration of rural youth to urban centers presents a significant challenge to the education systems in rural areas, the inescapable fact remains that a more serious concern is that of providing adequate occupational training to meet the changing needs of the local labor market. Numerous studies and surveys make it abundantly clear that there is only limited opportunity for rural youth to obtain occupational training for employment available in their local communities.

Training Opportunities and Employment

In discussing the occupational training opportunities for rural youth, two studies recently completed in the Center for Occupational Education at North Carolina State University provides some illuminating findings. One of the studies was concerned with changes in the nature of occupational education programs as a community moves from a predominately agrarian economy to an industrial economy. In other words, how are social and economic changes in a community reflected by the development of occupational training programs for its citizens?[7] The second study was concerned with identifying the employment problems that teenage school leavers face as they move from school into the local labor market, and seeking some of the causes of these problems as they are related to the employment structure of the labor market, the school system or the

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[6]Committee on Vocational Education, op. cit., p.6

[7]C. I. Jones, "Wilson County Community Survey: Education and Manpower," (Unpublished Research Monograph), Center for Occupational Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1969.

personal characteristics of the teenagers themselves.[8] Both studies point to some real problems faced by rural youth in acquiring appropriate occupational training.

In the Wilson County study, which surveyed occupational and educational changes since 1940, the number of jobs available in the community increased 33.3 percent. Table 1 shows that the largest increases were among the operative and kindred workers (+ 166.2 percent), clerical, and kindred workers (145.1 percent), and service workers (+108.8 percent) categories. The categories showing the largest increase were those requiring vocational training.[9]

Looking at the occupational training programs in the public schools, Jones found that no significant change in the vocational offerings had occurred between 1940 and 1967 with the exception of the addition of an occupational orientation course entitled Introduction to Vocations.[10] Table 2 shows the vocational education offerings by ten-year intervals beginning with the year 1940. Comparing these offerings and the developing need for training, Jones suggested that:

> The historical development of occupational educational offerings in the public schools and the technical institutes does not appear to reflect the need for the change demanded by manpower requirements as the economy has changed from basic agrarian to industrial characteristics.

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[8]C.H. Rogers, L.J. Hausman, C. Green, W.R. Parker, and R.D. Artis, "Teenage Unemployment in Two Selected Rural Counties in the South," (Unpublished Research Monograph), Center for Occupational Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1969.

[9]C. I. Jones, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

[10]Ibid., p. 21.

Table 1. Occupational Characteristics of the Population, Wilson County, N.C.,1940, 1950, 1960[a]

Occupational Description	Number of Jobs by Ten-Year Intervals[b]						Change in Jobs	
	1940	Percent Jobs Reported	1950	Percent Jobs Reported	1960	Percent Jobs Reported	Total Nos., 1940-1960	Percent Change
Professional, Tech. Kindred Workers	744	4.95	1107	5.86	1456	7.75	+ 682	+ 91.8
Farmers & Farm Managers	4465	28.56	3948	20.90	2545	13.54	-1920	- 43.0
Prop., Mgr., Off. (Except farms)	894	5.71	1281	6.78	1292	6.87	+ 398	+ 46.7
Clerical, Sales & Kindred	1255	8.02	2315	12.26	3083	16.41	+1828	+145.1
Craftsman, Foremen, Kindred Workers	832	5.32	1664	8.81	2034	10.82	+1202	+ 69.2
Operatives, Kindred Workers	1067	6.82	2046	10.83	2834	15.08	+1767	+166.2
Domestic Service Workers	1158	7.40	938	4.96	1315	7.00	+ 157	+ 13.5
Service Workers (except domestic)	696	4.45	993	5.25	1473	7.84	+ 777	+108.8
Farm Laborers, Farm Foremen	1569	10.03	2067	10.94	1796	9.56	+ 227	+ 14.6
Farm Laborers, Unpaid Family workers	1863	11.91	1512	6.43	(Not Reported)			
Laborers, (except Farms)	869	5.55	771	4.08	956	5.08	+ 87	+ 10.0
Occupations not Reported	189	1.20	239	1.26	(Not Reported)			
Total	15,631		18,881		18,784		+5205[c]	+ 27.7[d]

[a]Adopted from: C.I. Jones, "Wilson County Community Survey: Education and Manpower," Center for Occupational Education, North Carolina State University, 1969 (Draft).

[b]U.S. Bureau of Census: 1940, 1950, 1960.

[c]This represents total only for categories reported.

[d]Based on categories reported 1940-1960.

Table 2. Historical Development of Vocational Education in Wilson County[a]

High Schools	Vocational Courses Taught			
	1940	1950	1960	1967
Lee Woodard	Vo-Ag Home Ec.	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Lucama	Vo-Ag Home Ec.	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Rock Ridge	Vo-Ag Home Ec.	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag-Bus. Home Ec. Bricklaying	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Saratoga Central	Vo-Ag Home Ec.	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Speight	Home Ec.	Home Ec. Vo-Ag Business	Home Ec. Vo-Ag Business	Home Ec. Vo-Ag I.V.-Business
Springfield		Vo-Ag Business	Vo-Ag Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Stantonsburg	Vo-Ag	Vo-Ag Business	b	b
Gardners	Vo-Ag	Vo-Ag Business	b	b
Williamson		Vo-Ag Business	b	b
C.H. Darden		Business	Bricklaying Business	Bricklaying Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Fike		I.C.T. Business	I.C.T. Business	I.C.T. Home Ec. Business
Frederick Douglas		Vo-Ag Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
Elm City	Vo-Ag Home Ec.	Vo-Ag Home Ec. Business	Vo-Ag-Bus. Home Ec. Bricklaying 1/2	Vo-Ag Home Ec. I.V.-Business
C.L. Coon				I.V. Business

[a]Adapted from: C.I. Jones, "Wilson County Community Survey: Education and Manpower," Center for Occupational Education, North Carolina State University, 1969 (Draft).

[b]Absorbed in Consolidation.

Jones offered the following conclusions about the relationship between occupations and training which have implications for rural youth:[12]

1. Eighty-seven percent of the job positions found within the manpower survey of Wilson County comprise occupational clusters for which vocational-technical education is appropriate.
2. The vocational course offerings at the high school level are appropriate to only 25 percent of job positions within the manpower structure, and such offerings have not changed substantially during the preceding twenty-seven years.
3. The vocational-technical course offerings at the Wilson Technical Institute are appropriate to 16 percent of the job positions within the manpower structure.
4. A relatively high percentage of the students in the public schools do not complete twelve years, thus effectively limiting the amount of vocational training and general education they receive in high school.
5. Twenty-one of the firms in Wilson County provide training for their employees. The net possibility resulting from these training programs is only 16 percent of the job positions in the manpower structure.

A liberal interpretation of the data from this study indicates that the combination of occupational training opportunities provided by the schools, the technical institute, and industry provides preparation for slightly more than 50 percent of the job positions in the manpower structure. The study demonstrates graphically that appropriate occupational

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[12] Ibid., p. 32.

training opportunities for rural youth are severely limited in terms of the employment opportunities in the community, to say nothing of training needed for those who will migrate to urban centers.

The second study was conducted in Harnett and Moore counties in North Carolina. It had as one of its major objectives the inventory of educational and training opportunities available to rural youth. Another objective was to determine the teenager's perception of the value that occupational training had on his ability to obtain and hold a job. Data were collected from a sample of 345 out-of-school teenage youth, a sample of 116 managers of businesses and industries and the principals of all the public high schools.

The school systems in Moore and Harnett counties are similar to many schools systems in the rural South. One county, for instance, has not yet consolidated its school and still has a large number of small high schools scattered across the countryside. Conversely, the other county is just now completing a consolidation plan which will merge all the county's schools into three schools for the entire county. At the time of this study only two consolidations were completed. However, some contrasts in the type of occupational course offerings in the two different situations were observed. The larger consolidated and racially integrated schools afforded a wider range of vocational course offerings than did the smaller predominately white or Negro schools. Nevertheless, none of the schools surveyed offered the breadth of vocational course offerings necessary to train for job positions identified in the two-county area.

Approximately 81 percent of the total high school population in the two counties enrolled in some form of vocational training while in

high school. On the surface this percentage seems quite impressive. An examination of the courses in which the students enrolled, however, raises a question about the appropriateness of the training.

Of those enrolled in occupational courses, 56.5 percent were in vocational agriculture or home economics, and an additional 30.5 percent in office occupations. The remaining 13 percent comprised enrollments in trades and industries, distributive education, industrial arts and introduction to vocations.[13] As in Wilson County, there appears to have been little change in the vocational offerings over the past two decades with the exception of the addition of introduction to vocations.

To further document the irrelevancy of the occupational training that was offered, the responses of the teenagers sampled who were employed indicated that only 31.6 percent perceived their high school vocational training as useful in obtaining their first job. Among Negro youth, only 22.5 percent perceived their vocational training as useful. Of the total sample of 344 rural teenagers, 54 had never been employed.[14] Obviously, any vocational training they might have received had not yet been of value in obtaining a job. Seventy (or 20.3 percent) of the teenagers had enrolled in occupational education or training programs after leaving school. However, only 13 percent of the Negroes enrolled in post-secondary education, compared to 28.1 percent of the whites. This finding leads one to suspect that the Negroes either do not see post-secondary occupational education as a means of occupation escalation, they are not being actively recruited by such institutions, or, they do not have

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[13] Rogers, et. al., op. cit., pp. 147-148

[14] Ibid., p.84.

the resources that would enable them to defer taking a job.[15]

Each of the respondents who had received post-secondary training was asked if he used the training on his present job. Of the 66 teenagers responding, 48.5 percent responded affirmatively. However, only 27.3 percent of the Negroes indicated they were using the training, compared to 59.1 percent of the whites. When teenage males were compared, it was found that none of the Negroes were using the training, compared to 59.1 percent for whites. It would appear from these findings that additional investment in post-secondary training is far more valuable to whites than Negroes. It may also point to possible discrimination in the labor market to the extent that Negroes who stay in the area can find no place to use their added training once it is completed.[16]

When respondents were asked about their desire for more education and training, over 92 percent indicated a desire for additional training. When asked about the type of training they desired, 21.7 percent wanted to complete high school, 11.7 percent college training, 63 percent wanted vocational or technical training, and 3.6 percent were uncertain.[17] Obviously, a large majority of these rural youth desired an opportunity to pursue additional occupational training.

It was evident that in all aspects of occupational training, both formal and informal, Negro youth were found to be in a disadvantaged position. In fact, the only area in which there was no difference be-

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[15] Ibid., p. 90.

[16] Ibid., p. 90.

[17] Ibid., p. 93.

tween Negroes and whites was in the amount of general education. Moreover, although Negroes appear just as willing as whites to pursue additional training, their experience has shown that the opportunities to use additional training, both general and occupational, after they have completed it, is much more limited than for whites.[18]

Other evidence could be cited which would further point to the inadequacy of occupational training opportunities for rural youth, but it seems unnecessary to belabor the point. The fact of inadequate and inappropriate occupational training for rural youth is amply documented. A more important problem that demands the attention of vocational educators is: "What must we do to provide appropriate occupational training for rural youth?" The following paragraphs will try to provide some ideas and suggestions for answering that question.

Suggestions and Recommendations

First of all, the 1968 Amendments to the 1963 Vocational Education Act have given much stronger emphasis to providing training to better meet the manpower needs of the states and to make appropriate occupational training available to all population groups. Section 123, which deals with the state plan for vocational education, states that policies and procedures will assure that:

> (A) due consideration will be given to the results of periodic evaluations of State and local vocational education programs, services, and activities in the light of information regarding current and projected manpower needs and job opportunities, particularly new and emerging needs and opportunities on the local, State and national levels,
> (B) due consideration will be given to the relative vocational education needs of all population groups in all

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[18] Ibid., p. 103.

> geographical areas and communities in the State, particularly persons with academic, socioeconomic, mental, and physical handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in regular vocational education programs.
>
> (C) due consideration will be given to the relative ability of particular local educational agencies within the State, particularly those in economically depressed areas and those with high rates of unemployment, to provide the resources necessary to meet the vocational education needs in the areas of communities served by such agencies.[19]

The provisions of this federal legislation lay the groundwork for extending training opportunities for youth in rural areas. Furthermore, funds authorized by this Act are earmarked to assure that the stated provisions are met.

As far as the states and local communities are concerned, small schools must be consolidated. There is no question about the fact that comprehensiveness of occupational training is related to size of the school. Some relief might be sought by the establishment of additional vocational centers that may be shared by a number of rural schools to provide training for both youth and adults.

Racially separate school systems in the South must be fully integrated. Many of the disadvantages that Negro youth experience in occupational training opportunities could be eliminated through the consolidation of Negro and white schools, though the greater problem of their utilization of this opportunity remains to be solved. Greater study of the manpower needs of the economic area and the occupational plans of rural youth should be made on a continuous basis to serve as

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[19]Public Law 90-576, 90th Congress, H.R. 18366, October 16, 1968, p. 11

a basis for directing and rdirecting vocational programs. This will assure greater relevance of occupational training both to the manpower needs and to the collective needs of rural youth.

Another possibility for providing greater occupational training opportunity is to develop vocational curricula in rural schools that provide training for more than one occupation. This is known as the "occupational cluster" concept. Work is now underway in the Center for Occupational Education to develop and test this concept. Dr. Joseph W. Cunningham is directing a project to study job commonalities relevant to occupational education. The major objectives of this project are to: (1)develop a conceptual framework for defining common denominators of jobs based on the principles of learning transfer; (2) construct a job analysis instrument based on the conceptual framework to be used in studying job similarities; and (3) to try out and validate this instrument. The results of this study and others like it should have much to offer in extending occupational training opportunities for youth in small rural schools.

Finally, changes within vocational agriculture can increase the occupational training opportunities for rural youth. Let's face it, in a large percentage of rural schools, vocational agriculture is the only avenue that a boy or girl has for any type of occupational training. Therefore, it is incumbent upon agricultural educators to be sensitive to the occupational training needs of these young men and to orient local programs of vocational agriculture to accommodate as many of these needs as possible. A few possibilities come to mind.

1. Develop "modules" of instruction which might serve not only agriculture students but other high school boys aspiring to other occupa-

tional pursuits related to the instruction. If we look closely at the vocational agriculture curriculum, we may well find units that could be redeveloped to serve this dual purpose.

2. Consider the possibility of using cooperative work experience programs to extend the training potential of rural schools. This may allow the teacher of agriculture an opportunity to work with local business and industry to provide training stations to agribusiness students and students with occupational interests other than agriculture.

3. Consider the possibility of team teaching with other vocational teachers as well as academic teachers to extend occupational training opportunities. This may be a way to begin implementing a program to teach for occupational "clusters," thus providing training for a wider range of student interests.

These suggestions should not be construed as a total answer to the very complex problem we are facing. Obviously, they can do no more than provide a starting point from which future problems and future solutions might be identified. But the problem should not have to wait until a total solution is available, the future of agricultural education, indeed, the future of all education, demands that we begin as soon as possible to do the best we can with what we have.